The Bee Gees, left to right, Robin Gibb, Colin Petersen, Barry Gibb, Vince Melouney, Maurice Gibb.

THIS IS OUR LIFE

Barry continues writing for you—telling you in his own words the story of The Bee Gees.

BY BARRY GIBB

BEFORE I get down to the more serious business in hand, must tell you more about The Bee Gees' Great Beard-Growing Contest. MUST tell you, 'cos I promised I would! What happens is this: whenever we get time off for a holiday, most of us decide to forget about shaving—we feel that the daily scraping is just a big drag.

So we run a contest. Who can get the most luxurious growth of beard in a specified time? ME, is the answer. But I'm run very close by Maurice. I'm not saying my beard ever gets in the Father Christmas class, but where it DOES come through strong it looks rather good.

Maurice came up with a theory that if you rub soap on the beard it encourages it to grow. I said it was rubbish—and that artificial aids were not allowed. Said Maurice: "Well, that must mean you haven't washed your face since the Great Contest started!" I didn't have an answer to that. . . .

Must just add that the beards are NOT for disguise. We don't believe in hiding from anybody, even the critics! And it's impossible to hide, anyway, even if you get a flat in the most exclusive part of Mayfair. You should see the expensive wooden doors of the pad I've been sharing in London—there are more telephone numbers, scratched on by nail-files or rusty nails or something, than in the phone directory.

And that sort of fan loyalty does not exactly knock us out . .

But let's get back to the 'This Is Our Life' scene. We got to *Massachusetts* before I started rambling on about beards. A number one hit record and a sort of comfortable feeling right there inside each of us. I guess this was the record that enabled us to think of ourselves as a real group. Vince, the last to join, was now an important part of our scene and we could at last visit the bank without having to avoid the steely gaze of the manager.

Funny thing about getting a hit record is this. Everybody assumes you just sit back and rake in the lolly. In fact, it takes ages to collect the royalties. Maybe it's six months before you see any at all. If the loot is to come from Australia, or America, or Outer Mongolia—we're big in Outer Mongolia but flop out in Inner Mongolia!—it could take a whole year.

How much can you make on a hit record? I mean SERIOUSLY make, rather than indulge in the guesswork you read in some papers. All depends on your royalty. Say you get a penny per record, then that's just over £4,000 on a million records. There aren't many million sellers, though. A big-seller ordinarily, assuming you haven't also written the songs, might be about £2,000—split that around a five-strong group and you see it doesn't put you in the millionaire class.

BUT. . . you're suddenly in demand after a hit. And you can go for the well-paid jobs on tours and personal appearances. So suddenly we took on that well-fed look. And mum and dad were able to move into a beautiful home in Penn, Buckinghamshire. Mum's marvellous. Knocked out by the way things have gone for us, she's now looking ten years younger than she was looking five years ago. And their home is haunted! I promise you that's true. Great clankings and funny noises—and if you look carefully you can see the outline of some strange old geezer! He's the lucky one—he doesn't have to pay rent.

Nowadays mum and dad can go anywhere they want. Like America, where we have relatives. They nip over there and rent an apartment with a swimming pool. In America, EVERYONE has a pool if they're connected with show business.

One day soon, I'll tell you just how we've spent what money we've earned, because it seems a lot of you are interested. I think you'll be very surprised, as it happens . . .

But I must now slip in a bit of current news because we are highly chuffed over our up-coming American tour. We're playing both the Hollywood Bowl and the Forest Hills Stadium, which means mammoth audiences. But even better is that we're working on TV there with Jerry Lewis. This'll please Robin and Maurice who used to chuck in impersonations of him when we did our act in the early days on Australia.

So we'll be looking forward . . . what's that? My space filled already? Ah well, see you all next week.